

(Newsletter article by Pastor Scott Grorud to Faith Lutheran Church, Hutchinson, MN)

Although you will read this article nearly a week after the special congregational meeting on February 21, I am writing it two days beforehand, so I have no idea what the vote on the resolution to begin the process to leave the ELCA will be. I have heard various predictions, of course, but until the votes are counted, there is no way to know.

However, not knowing the result is a good thing in this case. It makes this a good time to try to say clearly what, from the perspective of Pastor Randy and me, this vote does and does not mean.

- ❖ The resolution before the special meeting was *not* proposed because Faith Lutheran is trying to change its teaching or beliefs or practices in some way. It is just the opposite. The teaching and beliefs and practices of the ELCA have drifted in subtle, but such significant ways that we are concerned that remaining tied to it no longer serves our mission or ministry.
- ❖ The proposed resolution is not a sudden decision or a knee-jerk reaction to the decisions of the ELCA churchwide assembly last summer. Faith Lutheran has been instrumental in efforts to reform the ELCA and bring it back to its core teachings for more than 15 years. Those efforts bore some fruit, but not enough to stop the theological drift. What changed at last summer's assembly is that this drift was *officially* approved for the first time and made a part of the ELCA's teaching and practice. That makes continued membership in it highly problematic.
- ❖ A denomination like the ELCA is *not* the same as the Church (capital C), what the Bible calls "the Bride of Christ." Denominations are one of the incarnate, concrete ways we experience the Church, but as incarnate expressions, they come and go. Any of you who have been at Faith longer than 20 years have belonged to another denomination, The American Lutheran Church, and 28 years before that, Faith belonged to the United Evangelical Lutheran Church. Others of you came here from other Lutheran denominations, such as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, or from Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist and other Christian denominations. Out of that variety, our unity is in Christ, not in any one denomination.
- ❖ Regardless of the outcome of Sunday's vote, our life and ministry as a church will not change. Randy and I will continue to serve as your pastors. Our preaching and teaching will be consistent. Our convictions will not change. Your experience as a member of Faith will not be any different. That is not to say that this decision is unimportant, but it should not affect the day-to-day life of our church in any discernible way.
- ❖ What is most important is that we pass on the faith as we received it to our children and grandchildren. Even as the world changes, the Gospel does not and our call is to uphold that truth so that it can endure through the ages until Christ returns again. The good news is that the preservation of the faith is God's responsibility, not ours, but we are called to be as faithful as we can in proclaiming the truth as it is revealed in the Bible. It is just at this point that we believe the ELCA has moved to a place that cannot be accepted.

I hope this is helpful for you—again, regardless of the outcome of the vote on Sunday. If you have any questions or concerns after the meeting, please call, come in or send an e-mail. We would welcome *any* opportunity to talk through the decision (whatever it is) and its implications for our mission and ministry together.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Scott